

## **THE CONSUMER OF THE VISUAL CULTURE ERA: A PROFILE FROM REAL TO VIRTUAL WORLD**

### **GÖRSEL KÜLTÜR ÇAĞININ TÜKETİCİSİ: GERÇEK DÜNYADAN SANAL DÜNYAYA DEĞİŞEN TÜKETİCİ PROFİLİ**

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#### **Abstract**

The history of consumption, which has started in the beginning of the humankind and still continues nowadays, has experienced many changes throughout this process. While in the past, the approach was to work and consume only as much as needed to survive, the new way of perceiving this issue is to work in order to purchase more and sustain our existence according to how much we can consume. As Baudrillard said, today we have reached such a point that the concept of consumption is based more than on the object itself, on the idea it expresses and the image attached to it. Consumption products thus carry upon their symbolic meanings a certain sense of belonging for their possessors. Within the cultural configurations it takes the form of an imperative component for an image, symbol or other type of indicators. That is why consumption is not a real spectrum for relations, but a sort of behavior completely guided out by indicators, signs and symbolic representation.

Consumption nowadays has been transformed not only from a conceptual point of view but also from the perspective of those tools that enable its existence. The Internet, invented at the end of 1960's as the product of a military project, has become very popular throughout the 1980's due to the use of personal computers, and consequently has become a consumption tool nowadays. As such, with its newly gained position it came to be in the same time a precursor of the new idea of economy. During the 1990's, it continued to develop parallel with communication and information technologies. It thus managed to break the boundaries of communication as it has been known so far, go beyond appealing only to limited groups within the corporate world, and become a dissemination center at the disposal of the great masses. The social areas and virtual environment that web technologies have formed within the economic and communication fields have become new channels for consumption. The users of these areas, consumers that is, become in this respect profiles that give decisions and act upon symbols and indicators. Consumption indicators thus come forward as singular identities and portray in this form cultural differences in the postmodern world, constituting in this manner a subject of inquiry for all the actors of the new economy in terms of finding out who these consumers of the visual culture really are. In this respect this study aims to evaluate the new consumer's profile in the light of recent sociological and cultural changes with the help of new communication technologies.

**Key Words:** Virtual World, Visual Culture, Consumer, Images, Visual Communication

### Özet

İnsanoğlunun var olduğu günden buyana başlayan tüketim tarihi, süreç içerisinde birçok dönüşüm geçirmiştir. Eski dönemin bakış açısı, ihtiyacı kadar almak ve çalışmak iken yeni anlayış daha çok satın almak için çalışmak ve tükettiğin kadarıyla varlığını sürdürebilmek üzerine kurgulanmıştır. Bugünkü gelinen noktada Baudrillard'ın dediği gibi, tüketim kavramı artık nesnelerin ötesinde fikir ve imajların tüketilmesini içermektedir. Tüketim ürünleri, taşıdıkları sembolik anlamlar üzerinden bireylere özel aidiyetler taşımaktadır. Kültürel dokular içerisinde, imaj, işaret ve göstergelerde tüketim baskın bir öğe halini almaktadır. Bu nedenle tüketim; reel bir ilişkiler spektrumu değil, tamamıyla gösterge, sembolik temsil ve işaretlerin yönlendirdiği bir davranış biçimidir.

Günümüzde tüketim sadece kavramsal açıdan değil aynı zamanda tüketimi sağlayan araçlar açısından da dönüşmüştür. 1960'lı yılların sonunda askeri bir projenin ürünü olarak icad edilen internetin, 1980'li yıllara gelindiğinde kişisel bilgisayarların popüler olmasıyla birlikte bir tüketim aracı haline gelmiştir. İnternet yeni konumuyla aynı zamanda yeni ekonomi fikrinin de öncüsü olmuştur. 1990'lı yıllara gelindiğinde ise, iletişim ve bilişim teknolojileri ve internet birbiriyle paralel olarak gelişmiş; iletişimin sınırlı yapısını kırarak iş hayatında sınırlı gruplara hitap etmenin ötesine geçmiş, büyük kitlelere yayılımın merkezi haline gelmiştir. Bugünün ekonomi ve iletişim alanında web teknolojilerinin oluşturduğu sanal ortam ve sosyal alanlar, tüketimin yeni mecraları olmuştur. Bu alanların kullanıcısı tüketiciler ise, göstergeler ve imgeler üzerinden hareket eden ve karar veren profil çizmektedir. Tüketim göstergelerinin birer kimlik olarak öne çıktığı ve kültürel farklılıkların söz konusu kimlikler yoluyla betimlendiği postmodern dünyada görsel kültürün tüketicilerinin gerçekte kimler olduğu yeni ekonomide tüm aktörler için merak konusudur. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmada yaşanan bu kültürel ve sosyolojik değişimlerin odağında, yeni iletişim teknolojilerinin vasıtasıyla oluşan yeni tüketici profilinin değerlendirmesi amaçlanmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Görsel Dünya, Görsel Kültür, Tüketici, İmgeler, Görsel İletişim

### INTRODUCTION

It is observed for years that the cultural meanings people created in order to communicate have been as important as the language itself and every era also has created its own individual because of the structural features of it. In this case, the human being can also create a culture suitable for its own being. We can say that in our time we continuously come across visual images and we live in this age of hegemony of a visual culture ruled by mass media like photographs, movie, television and internet.

Barnard (2002) tries to explain visual culture with the combination of the terms "visual" and "cultural". According to him, visual culture includes everything that can be seen. But he also expresses that not everything can be seen is a visual culture element, in order for it to be counted as such element, the thing that is seen should also include signs that reflects a society's beliefs and values. (Barnard, 2002: 27)

According to Parsa (2007:1), since the beginning of the eras, every era expressed itself with a language unique to itself. Archaic Age was the period of myths, legends, and mythic narrations. In the dominance of this period, the meaning is created by its own "words" and its rules. In Middle Age, words fly away, writings remain becoming a symbol of authority and power; in the Age of Enlightenment the literal expression and the invention of printing press

had brought the freedom of writing language with themselves. The writing dominated the meaning and the setting up of the expression. With the fast development of the technology along with the invention of camera, then the live images like cinema and television; a new period dominated by “images and visual culture” has begun.

He emphasizes that visual culture is an approach dealing with experiences and social-cultural evaluations of visual materials and people’s explanations of things they witness. He describes visual culture as images, opinions, and combination of every existing culture from one dimensional to multidimensional culture, to folk or to elite culture. (Parsa, 2007: 9).

### **1. Visual Culture**

It can be said that the concept of visual culture is used to indicate contemporary cultural values of 20<sup>th</sup> Century’s informative approaches. Pioneering by Duncum, Evans and Hall (1999), the term “visual culture” is claimed to be first used by Svetlana Alpers (art history professor in California University) in a research in 1983, Elkins indicates Michael Baxandall (1933–2008) (also art history professor in California University) is the one first used the term in his research in 1972. In the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century and during 21<sup>st</sup> century, the visual culture products started to form and in this culture, the visual culture definitions include everything can be seen, while later on the definitions are made in order to identify art designs from others. At this point, the definition of artist and designer also differentiates from each other.

In our age of pluralistic world, the images that increase in parallel to the increasing cultural values are being produced by people and these people are also shaped by these images that they create. In other saying, every image helps to materialize a vision style that is unique to and contradicting with itself in the historical, social and cultural aspects. (Leppert, 2002: 14).

The artist of our time, beyond being a master showing his skills, also works as a technician who designs and sometimes directs it. So it becomes natural to design a project or process and to do it with the help of a group of experts rather than just to produce it. (Toksöz, 2008: 191) In this context, three different explanations can be made on visual culture. Tavin (2009b) has summarized them as follows;

- a) A condition that visions and images that the new technology created affect experiences of people and direct towards various visual practices.
- b) Everything that includes different object and visual groups.
- c) A discipline of a critical study that interpret different aspects of visual findings, experiences and cultures. (Tavin, 2009b: 115-124)

In the first article, it is indicated that with the technological production and consumption of visuals, the social changes are being evaluated and the visuals are effective in constituting information. At the same time, the transfer of information can support expression of personal opinions, political movements, values and beliefs. That’s why the images around us affect the development of identities. In the first article, the visual culture is linked with economy, the visuals and objects are thought to be the materials forming culture. It is indicated that art works, photographs, movies, computer games, fashion, designer products, internet and satellite images affect people’s cultural experiences. In the third article, it is said that visual culture is a research field and it aims to evaluate visual sense of belonging and visual constitutions. To sum up, these three articles associate with each other and they are uniting, overlapping and informing.

Visual culture is a new type of culture existed in 21<sup>st</sup> century as a natural result of multi-directional communication, also created all together by knowledge and widespread visual angles. This new culture is a synthesis basically based on seeing and things that are shown. In this aspect, the visual culture consists of an understanding in perceiving things one see and

taking them up to meta-conscious. (Karadağ, 2004: 13). In this context, it can be said that every visual is effective in one's life, changes one's ideas so in this culture era, the effect of visuals on people or societies is more important than the visual itself.

Thus, along with the visual culture transformation we experience, individuals and societies consumption habits have changed and with the changes in technology, a new type of consumer has emerged. The signs in images and brands are effectively being consumed rather than the objects themselves. This is because of the objects as well as the visual culture itself having a reminder feature effect on people's mind. According to Featherson (1996), "As social life purifies itself from its rules and social relations change becoming more free of consistent norms, consumption society becomes a more cultural society in itself. Overproduction of signs, reproduction of images and simulations lead to lose the consistent meanings and also lead to populations being mesmerized by the eternal flow of these shapeless contiguities. (Featherson, 1996: 40). At this point, it is necessary to evaluate the constituted consumer and consumption society concepts.

## **2. Consumption Culture**

For centuries, there has always been the concept of consuming and different definitions of it have been made since it became a different phenomenon with the globalization. As sociologists begin to make their analysis of social behaviors separated from political and economic movements, they also begin to approach concept of consumption not as an economic movement such as supply and demand, production, sum of money, interest rates but as a social fact. (Bocock 2005: 15). As sociologically evaluated, consumption can be explained not by the differences formed by economic causes but by the social and cultural activities that create differences between social groups.

Along with the economic revival following the years II. World War, as Galbraith says societies in United States of America and Western Europe countries started to become wealthy and for the people living in these countries, consumption become not only a way of connection and choice, but also a will to understand the meanings of the products. Although, so many studies use a condemning and fierce tone when dealing with consumption from many different aspects, the term has already settled as a moral doctrine in developed countries. As puritan ethics based on self-sacrifice has weakened and in the end of ideologic transformations, the meaning of consumption widened including the terms success, pleasure, fun and freedom and it started to be seen as an essence of a good life. Moreover, along with the increase in quality of life, consuming more becomes the sign of power and happiness; as life style starts to substitute for social class, it starts to be perceived as a base for social identity. In this context, the term "consumption society" is identified as a new understanding related to mass consumption occurred right after mass production. Production is thought to be the basic causative factor. On the other hand, the historical analyze of consumption society cannot be simplified as an increase in marketed goods. Although there has not been a specific period identifying when consumption societies have started to emerge, some writers claim that the roots of them chronologically go back to 18th century. They also claim that as production for consumption takes place consumption for getting by, people inevitably start to become consumers (Yanıklar, 2006: 25-29). In respect to this, consumption changes in a social and cultural process and consumption culture is a concept that occurs not solely by the act of consuming.

Consumption culture is a culture of an environment where material goods and services are attributed positive meanings; where there are hedonist, show-off products, products that are belong to a group or a specific culture are purchased, embraced, consumed or followed. Consumption with its desires and social forms can be described by purchasing, owning or using

high prestige, esthetic products for these purposes. At the same time, this culture indicates a culture that is dominated by consumption products and where cultural reproduction is understood as a free will in the private space of daily life. (Zorlu, 2006: 60, 61) Consumption products are dealing with constituting and transforming different meanings on brands, commercials and material products in order to transmit consumer's personal and social circumstances, identities and life styles. (Arnould ve Thompson, 2005: 871).

Consumption culture bases on the idea that consumer needs are endless and insatiable. In fact, assuming there are an endless demand in order to have much more consumption products means accepting a basic feature of modern consumption culture without any evidence or explanation. In many cultures if there is a possibility of insatiable needs, it is a sign of social or moral illness of the society; whereas the principle of consumption culture in which individuals could have endless needs is thought totally usual for people living in it. In a society where consumption culture dominates, the goods which keeps changing shapes according to their meta production are sold increasingly and this provides more source and this requires people's being tend to spend these sources in order to have more consumption products (Yanıklar, 2006: 53-54).

Consumers being seen as creatures "that lives in a material world" is the invention of the spirit of consumption society. Our world is invaded by an understanding includes consumption objects, people's characters are analyzed according to the products they have. The time we spend out to shops beside routine social relationships, slowly started to become the time we spend running after objects. Even the daily talks we make with other people are about consumption (Joy ve Walendorf, 1996: 107).

In consumption culture, it is thought that individuals communicate with each other through mass media. Baudrillard (2012) says; the content of the message and the signified indicators are mostly unimportant. He says that we are not bound to these content of messages or the signified indicators and the mass media does not send us to the real world, media only shows us the real indicators while consuming the verified indicators. (Baudrillard, 2012: 26).

The products that individuals own have the job to reflect their identity, their value in society and their prestige. Instead of being "irreplaceable" outside of its normal function, outside of its own meaning, the object acquiring connotations, suddenly becomes an object of every field, replaceable by every other object. For example, wash machines serves as a kitchen utensil and has a role of an object of comfort and prestige. Its consumption area is this second area. In this area, every other object can replace wash machine reflecting the same meaning. As in logic of symbols, the logic of signs is also not connected to any function or defined need. This is because the objects satisfy this need. Either it is logic of society or logic of needs, the objects serves this purpose with creating a dynamic and unconscious explanation area. (Baudrillard, 2012: 89). As understood that the consumption now is an understanding in indicator's value outside of its general usage.

Baudrillard states that the post-modern era we live in or late capitalist approach directs people to a process called hyper-reality in where people are surrounded by signs, images or simulation games. Featherston (1996) says that late capitalism covers consuming goods initial usage value, Baudrillard also develops the idea that the indicator of the goods has developed the capacity to be loaded with a wide range of image and symbolic meanings to themselves so a qualitative change occurs. With this qualitative change, as amphibious indicators and images pile on top of each other creating a range of simulations produced by the consumption-television culture, the sense of reality starts to disappear. Baudrillard calls this "hyperreality". Hyperreality is a world in where consumption and signs, images and simulations through

television pile on top of each other ending with an unsteady, estheticized reality delusion. According to Baudrillard, to the extent that culture's being everywhere, mediating and estheticizing social structure and social relations, culture effectively became an amphibious being. (Featherson, 1996: 165).

In this case, individuals seek psychological and symbolical satisfaction rather than material one. Briefly with the signs and images, individuals take part in a consumption market that became an unreal simulation. "At the level of signs, there is no absolute wealth or poverty, nor there is any opposition between the signs of wealth and the signs of poverty" (Baudrillard, 2012: 98). This society we call the consumption society whose consumption desire is continuously increased and some of this is also achieved, this new social order is thought to be the beginning of technological changes. So there is a new way of consumption and this consumption is made through new mass media.

According to Robins (1999: 26-67) "Postmodern life is a simulation world that struggles against material world's coming before signs, that image field has been set free, that the existence of the real world has been questioned." We witness a new world order through screens. In this globalized world, we mostly meet people through their images on screen.

### **3. New Information and Communication Technologies**

It is stated that wireless networks, satellite and fiber communication systems transforms globalized world into a system of thought, along with the development of new information technologies, a new social structure is formed. Along with this, it is assesmented that life continues over an image world triggering one another and over the signs between virtual and real indicators. With this view, it can be said that images drags people to a virtual environment and reality is replaced by image.

There is a widening gap between images and objective world. As we dig deeper into images, it gets unnecessary to deal with objects. We can imagine that as we dive into virtual world, we do not need real one anymore. At this point the reality dims and we start to see only our own reflections. (Robins, 1999: 67).

New communication technology consumer with his World Wide Web, cable TV, network, telephones, satellites etc. live his life interactively through these tools. Consumer needs are immediately defined and fulfilled with the help of communication technology systems in 21st century. Thus, it is impossible to imagine a life without life-saving new technologies along with information and communication technologies. Effective usage of all kind of media in our time caused a new consumer type to arise. This new type of consumer is the consumer of advanced technology. (Babaoğlu & Bener, 2010:107)

New communication technologies typically use microprocessors or computer skills and they enable or require interaction between users and also between users and knowledge. The common technical feature of these technologies is its benefiting from digital techniques in gathering, saving, processing and transferring information. (Timisi, 2003: 81).

Vural (2006) explains this as "it includes all the communication and computer technologies that gather, keep and transfer information through networks and serve it to users." (Vural, 2006: 1). It is also stated that there is a new kind of information technology that enables us to reach information easily, keep and record it and transfer it easier and faster through networks.

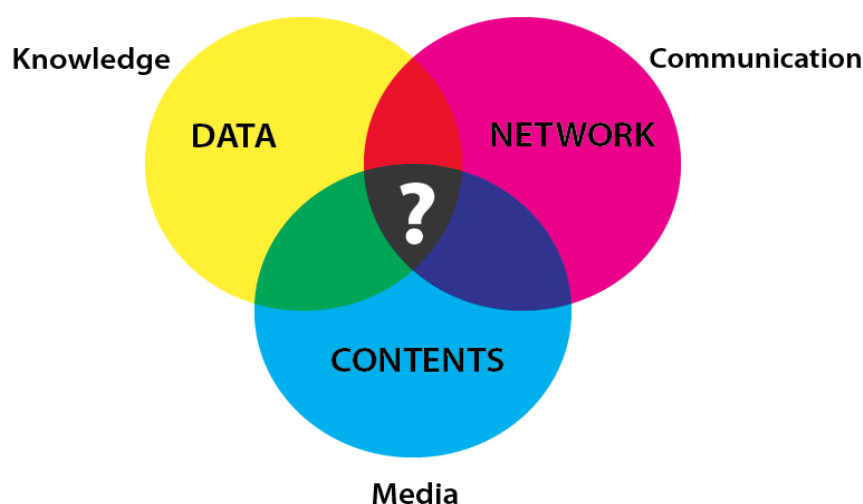
A new kind of world has emerged with the fast developments in computer and telecommunication technologies and with the fast installed network. In this sense, internet is an information technology system. Internet is a cheap and practical technology that satisfies people's increasing needs of producing information, keeping/sharing the information produced

and reaching it easily. With the help of this technology, people reach information in a lot of field easier, cheaper, faster and in a more secure way. In this aspect, internet resembles an ocean of information or a library. Internet being used either cabled or wireless brings a technological based variation into our lives. This variation changed our old style habits and created a new and digital culture, an information culture. (Wallerstein, 2000: 82) Here it is necessary to mention the result and also the support of this development; Web 2.0 and its applications.

New Media is a term first used in 1970s in information and communication based researches by the researchers working on the social, psychological, economic, political and cultural fields. But the concept, while first used in 1970s, has become widespread rapidly in 1990s with the use of developing computers and internet technologies and the usage of it reached important levels. Some writers and researches has explained the new media simply with a technology list of CD-ROM, HTML, streaming media, DV editing, network applications, DVD video; and they call these terms new media.

([http://newmedia.engli.iastate.edu/about/what\\_is\\_new\\_media](http://newmedia.engli.iastate.edu/about/what_is_new_media), Date of Access: 21.06.2014).

The new media term which emerged in our time with the digital developments in communication technologies, first emerged in 1970s as a result of the developments in information communication technologies and gathered speed in 1980s and 1990s. With the introduction of personal computers and with the use of internet in 90s, the usage of web sites and portal networks became widespread. As a result of these the computers got smaller and mobile computers (PDAs) became popular and this led to the developments in hardware and telecommunication technologies. Thus a new expression is needed to identify this rapidly developing technology. At the same time, it is necessary to identify the differences between new media and old media (classical media). Web 1.0 that we had been using from the beginning of communication technologies now has been replaced by Web 2.0 which increased activities of users and encouraged users to attend more and create more, in this concept, the meaning of new media has also changed.



*Picture 1. What is New Media? (Barr, 2000: 21)*

Based on the idea of Barr (2000), the group of words consisting of information, communication and media is called new media. We can shortly explain this as it's an area in where content is converted to numeric data that is transmitted from one point to another without time limit and with instant access and instant transfer. At this point, in order to clarify this term more, we can say that we see the classical media like newspapers, magazines, radio and television is now taken to the areas like internet, mobile or 3G also to blogs, wikis, social media networks and mobile applications which are based on the media provider Web 2.0 technology which has developed considerably in our time.

Web 1.0 offered its users limited opportunities, the context was on a static basis in the network and it was not allowed to interact with the server. In this technology only a small amount of users can produce context while a great many of them cannot. (Krishnamurthy & Cormode: <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2125/1972> Date of Access: 21.06.2014).

With the technological developments and increase in internet opportunities, users once are limited to read and shop through online, now can get benefit from it highly without knowing any technical information, they can form context and share them easily. This network, which is based on activities and communication, enables detailed information to be shared fast and without limit is called Web 2.0 by Tim O'Reilly, the founder of Media, in 2004. (Kahraman, 2010: 13). Web 2.0 consists of a system which has creative users sharing information with each other and it developed more due to an increase in its users. It approves personal user's private data to be rearranged by other people. At this point it is clearly seen it has various differences from Web 1.0.

	Web 1.0	Web 2.0
Form	To read	To read and contribute
Context's primary element	Page	Mailing/Registering
Condition	Static	Dynamic
See through..	Any web browser	Browsers
Structure	User Service	Web Service
Creation of the context	Through web coding	By anyone

**Tablo 1.** Differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 (From Lincoln, Bat, 2014: 106).

Web 2.0 gives the user the opportunity to change the context and bases on a dynamic structure, while Web 1.0 is static. Web 2.0 provides an interface where users can interact with each other; in Web 1.0 information can only be obtained on a system that the software developer has created. Thus today's digital world user has various reasons to prefer Web 2.0 technology. We can summarize them as follows; (From Rigby, Bat, 2014: 106)

**World of Connection:** Over 1 billion people go online.

**Network Effect:** The more a software, product or service is used, the more precious it gets.

**Users As Assistant Creators:** People are not only the reader of the online materials, they are also the writers and creators of them. People's contributions increase the value of the software and services.

**Power of Unison:** When internet users all around the world act all together in unison, they consciously or unconsciously create a great impact.



**Openness:** Internet's many tools like data and software become easily acquirable for many people who want to use them with either for a very small amount of fee or free.

**Combination:** This feature is mostly refer to the combination of many different sources.

**Revealing:** Web 2.0 software offers a flexible configuration and it needs users rather than web designers in order to be used.

**Various Experiences:** Web sites include video, picture and live visual media. These context are alike real world experiences.

In Web 2.0 one of the most important system applications; social media effects this transformation directly and the users of it is increasing every day. At this point, seeing that Web 2.0 increased interaction between people, terms like Web 3.0 and Web 4.0 are on their way which means social media context will be getting richer soon. While Web 2.0 is the technical level of social media term, the real term of social media should be handled as a tool to analyze user's behaviors.

### **3.1. Social Media**

Social media term came into being with Web 2.0 which turned online world from a read-only type to an interactive one; people whose aim is to exchange information, meet others from same sector or with same point of interest or with same attitude of mind started to gather all together in these social network areas to fulfil these aims. The relationships built in these areas created social media which consists of people meeting with each other also in real world. In our time, social media offers a network of information exchange between large numbers of users range from company managers to consultants, from internet leaders to advertisers, bloggers, writers, journalists (Bozkurt, 2010: 50).

As in another description; "social media is applications, behaviors and actions between individuals sharing news, ideas or information through media interactions and these media interactions are easily transferable web based contexts like words, photos, videos or voices". (Safko & Brake, 2009: 6) Social media is a technologic tool designed for media products to be shared easily. Social media is a term includes sharing blogs, wikis, micro blogs forums, photographs, videos, and music applications. Gülsoy (2009) describes it as "it is an online application developed independent from one another and enables consumers to reflect their own content and share it with the others" (Gülsoy, 2009:245).

The terms social media and Web 2.0 are related terms as well as being separate from each other. These two terms which are used in place of each other and are mostly confused with each other, but they also have some basic differences. Web 2.0 is a platform for applications whereas social media is a common name for communication tools using this platform. (Yayla, 2010:59). But Odabaşı & Odabaşı (2010) comment differently on that; saying "The platform of Web 2.0 appeared with great deal of developments like programs allow social participations, addible, flexible piece of software, social media tools, social networks, flexible label system against categorization, content formed by users, the content's spreading through sharing and it is highly remarkable with the opportunities it offers to personal users". (Odabaşı & Odabaşı, 2010:24).

The individuals make a habit of these technologies are increasing every day and there are social media users recorded more than the world population. The Universal Mccan Wave 6 research on that is remarkable. The data it revealed is as follows; (Universal Mccan Wave 6, 2012);

- Social media pages have 1.5 billion visitors every day.
- 81 percent of the users are visiting their friend's social media profiles.
- 88 percent of the users watch online videos.

- 47 percent of the individuals in internet become a member of a specific brand group.
- 49 percent of users upload videos on video sharing pages.
- Users spend their 13 hours in internet and 8 hours in social media pages per week.
- 42.9 percent use microblogging.
- 77 percent has social media profiles.
- 30 percent reach social media tools through mobile devices.
- User's PDA products and tablet usage is increasing due to their purpose of having a personal computer, internet and social media usage.

In our time many intellectuals have classified social media applications from different aspects like quality and function. Constantinides and Fountain (2008) has divided Web 2.0 applications into groups focusing on social media. These groups are as follows; (Constantinides and Fountain, 2008: 233):

- Social Networks
- Blogs
- Wikis
- Forums- Notice Boards
- Content Queries

#### **3.1.1 Social Webs**

The sites in social web link its users through a virtual network and enable them to share their information, knowledge, thoughts and contents. These social networking sites are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Myspace and Plaxo etc.

In social networking sites, users first create a profile and they can share their personal information like name, surname, birthday, marital status, work experiences, education status, religious and political choices, hobbies, interests. Users with profiles can join in groups of other people who share same interests, same political view and who work in same kind of job or live in the same city. In order to achieve this connection, "add friend" or similar type of features of the page is used. Other than this with the "search" feature, users can be searched according to their name, surname, e-mail, interests or cities they live in. (From Weinberg, İşlek, 2012: 51).

Social networking sites have some special features for their users. These are;

- They can have an open or semi open profile to everyone in a limited system.
- They can share any link with some of their friends they choose from their list.
- They can see their own profile as well as the other user's profiles.
- They can modify and update their own profiles.

#### **3.1.2 Blogs**

Blogs, abbreviation of Weblog, are creative settings in where people write and comment or share various visual and audial activities. It is also a setting in where blog writers write online diaries on various subjects like news, their thoughts, daily incidents and readers make comments on the subject. In addition to this, blog can also be a private site of one person writing and sharing on a specific subject or on a field he expertise in.

The comments in blogs are lined up from the last to the first and they are tagged by the users in different information categories in order to be found easily through blog or search engine.

#### **3.1.3 Wikis**

Wikis are sites that their contents can be modified by people. Sites like Digg, Delicious, Stumble Upon, Social Bookmarks ve Wikipedia are examples of it. Lin and Tsai (2011) called these sites social marking sites and every social marking site has its own terminology and every

one of them has cooperative and participative tagging system which enables their content to spread among other users through these social tagging sites. (Lin ve Tsai, 2011:1249).

#### **3.1.4 Forums- Notice Boards**

Sharing in these sites is according to user's private interests or expertise field. Sites like [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com), [www.aliexpress.com](http://www.aliexpress.com) or [www.python.org](http://www.python.org) are examples of it.

#### **3.1.5 Content Queries**

These are the sites enable users to reach desired information and give them the opportunity to fully organize the content, these are sites like [www.yandex.com](http://www.yandex.com) or [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com). Along with these sites, it is necessary to mention podcast sites as well.

Podcast also is called pod broadcasting in Turkish language refer to the sites enabling individuals to receive regular updates, works with a membership system, providing audible content. Podcasting is a word combination of I-pod and broadcast terms and these are the sites that broadcast online music to its users and enable them to download it if they like.

When referring to the different applications Web 2.0 offer to its users, we should not ignore the shopping feature of it. These multimedia applications beside their entertaining and informing features are vital channels for brands to market their products. Here, the important thing is the internet users and their behaviors. They are the texts, images, voices and videos and many other online technologies and practices the users benefit from when sharing their contents, ideas, insights, experiences and perspectives. In other words, social media is a wide online media includes variety of channels in an environment where there is public consciousness and users form the contents of it in cooperation. It enables companies to make contact with customers and customers to contact with each other to exchange ideas Web 2.0. based social media has brought a new dimension to people's communication by serving new channels like twitter, youtube, facebook and shape their personal lives. ( Aydoğan & Akyüz, 2010: 94-95).

With the new technologies, identities of the consumers are also changing as well as traditional commerce systems and the time has come for the commerce to be done through online. Written tools like advertisements, catalogues, leaflets of the past are replaced by new technology communication tools. In this context, a new term E-Commerce is to be analyzed.

#### **3.2 E-Commerce**

As mentioned above, since 1980 with the technological developments, literature has a new term called new technology. With the spreading of internet technology in 1990s enabling people to instantly communicate one another or all together helped to form various new commerce channels. In this respect, electronic commerce over internet has rapidly developed and constantly renovating itself, it immediately took attention of internet users in other word; consumers.

The discussions on the term New Economy is mostly on the good performance of it especially in 1990s in USA. In a research done in March 2000, 57 percent of residents in America state that this economy is significantly different than industrial economy. (Pohjola, 2002: 134).

Electronic commerce is interactive shopping between parties without getting in any physical contact or any exchange. (Bozkurt, 2010: 63). Social media channels are the most preferable channels for companies. Internet platforms where individuals contact each other through writings, photos, videos and voice recordings are now seen as a sales point by companies and users prefer consuming through these channels.

In the last decade the change in the consumer habits also changed the market dynamics. Consumers met internet and social media just when a decade ago they were only going to their jobs and schools from their homes, read newspapers and watch TV. Social network's

importance on brand communication is widely accepted, nearly all brands from white ware to textile are trying to increase their reputation by using visual strategies. Over hundred million people visit social web platforms and this leads to hundreds of new social network sites. Thus social webs are getting more effective and important in commerce and in political areas. Social webs are accepted as number one internet activity in the world. Instant messaging without any place or time limits affects consumer's shopping decisions. Two thirds of the world population visits any kind of social web and the time they spend in there is increasing three times faster than the time they spend in internet. Brands are using social media effectively in order to reach their target consumer faster and give their message of being innovative and energetic to large numbers of people. (Zorlu, 2011: 5). Especially after Web 3.0 working actively in user systems, users online activities and digital footprints are tracked and with this tracking a Big Data is formed so that the system define which advertisement is suitable for which user and it put the suitable advertisement to the user's news feed as a news. By violating people's privacy, the brands are trying to persuade the consumer with striking visuals. They create a social profile of the consumer keeping the record of the sites the consumer surfed or viewed. Later they try to persuade the consumer using stimulating visuals when the consumer is in online.

### CONCLUSION

With the developing new technologies, new terms are getting into our lives and this also leads to some changes in our culture. Because of this, images now are highly effective and we come across with them in many different occasions. Especially the changes in computer technologies changed the image fact and this changed the consumption culture and we come across a different sense of consumption coming from a different type of media. For example, while smart phone features are developing with every new model, the operating systems become simpler and more understandable for the consumer in order for him to use it more effectively. The most distinctive example on this is Apple's OS7 operating system. Accordingly lots of applications are renewing their interface every day and they require some kind of access permissions before the users install the application. The user by permitting these applications is started to be tracked and the user's mobile actions are also tracked and recorded. Through applications like Foursquare and Swarmuser's digital footprints and consumption culture are also analyzed. In our time, in applications like Instagram, Retrica etc., users reflect their own cultures in a platform they create by sharing their own photos, and even the brands use these platforms as an artistic cyber exhibit to promote their products and to capture the consumer.

In this context, we see social web services not only in computers but also in mobile devices and tablets. This targets brands to analyze consumption culture easily and to recognize the consumer's own cultural profile and combine them all in Web 4.0. Thus social media and other mobile media are used as a platform for brands to control and grasp the consumer. The visual storm of the postmodern era (especially considering every type of user) results in the visual understandability to diminish. Brands, with every update, give much more importance to simplicity and user friendly interfaces which direct users to priority aim of the application. This takes attention to design's obligation to address global taste and usability. It is emphasized in many sources that design has an indisputable importance on visual culture. In order to capture and visually persuade the consumer; the attractive design, usability and tailor-made approach are the most important magical trio of our time.

Thus visual culture and consumption culture coordinately undergo a change together. In other words, consumption culture in comparison to visual culture era is rapidly evolving changing consumer's perceptive approach.

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